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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 001173

SIPDIS

STATE FOR INL DAS MCCARTHY AND INL/LP
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/21/2014

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [MOPS](#) [FAIR](#) [PGOV](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: POST RESPONSE TO INQUIRY INTO APRIL 14, 2003

DOWNING OF DRUG TRAFFICKING PLANE BY HONDURAN AIR FORCE

REF: A. USDAO TEGUCIGALPA 242238Z SEP 02

[1B](#). 03 TEGUCIGALPA 913
[1C](#). 03 TEGUCIGALPA 924
[1D](#). CDR USSOUTHCOM 1723949Z APR 03
[1E](#). USDAO TEGUCIGALPA 211321Z APR 03
[1F](#). 03 STATE 101059
[1G](#). 03 TEGUCIGALPA 986
[1H](#). 03 TEGUCIGALPA 1173
[1I](#). 03 STATE 144757
[1J](#). 03 TEGUCIGALPA 1499
[1K](#). CDR USSOUTHCOM 182214Z JUL 03
[1L](#). TEGUCIGALPA 80
[1M](#). DIRJIATFSO 201408Z JAN 04
[1N](#). USDAO TEGUCIGALPA 211619Z JAN 04
[1O](#). USDAO TEGUCIGALPA 222221Z JAN 04
[1P](#). TEGUCIGALPA 179
[1Q](#). STATE 15961
[1R](#). TEGUCIGALPA 193
[1S](#). TEGUCIGALPA 203
[1T](#). TEGUCIGALPA 209
[1U](#). TEGUCIGALPA 289
[1V](#). STATE 35227
[1W](#). USDAO TEGUCIGALPA 241406Z FEB 04
[1X](#). TEGUCIGALPA 672
[1Y](#). STATE 98251

Classified By: Ambassador Larry L. Palmer;

Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[11](#). (U) Post appreciates the opportunity to comment on the time-line set forth in ref Y. Answers keyed to ref Y are provided in paragraph 4.

[12](#). (S) Post believes the time-line included in ref Y is largely accurate but not complete. Post has conducted an exhaustive search of its files in order to provide the Department other relevant information that might assist INL in formulating a response to the NSC's April 14, 2004 letter. The inclusion of reftels D, E, J, K, N, O, V, and W are intended for that purpose (the additional reftels will mean a revision in the cables referenced in the INL timeline).

[13](#). (S) For inclusion to, and modification of, INL time-line:

-- April 17, 2003: CMDR USSOUTHCOM formally notifies AMB that CNIES information sharing with the GOH had been suspended pending an investigation into the April 14 downing of a narcotics trafficking aircraft. CMDR USSOUTHCOM indicates what steps must be taken before information sharing with the GOH can resume (ref D).

-- June 25, 2003: Ambassador responds to CMDR USSOUTHCOM regarding substantive actions taken by the Honduran Air Force (HAF) to prevent a similar incident from reoccurring (ref J).

-- July 18, 2003: CMDR USSOUTHCOM informs Post that he has accepted the verbal assurances of the President of Honduras, based on ref I, that the GOH has a "no shoot down" policy and that CNIES information sharing with the GOH would resume July 18, 2003 (ref K). CMDR USSOUTHCOM refers to a USSOUTHCOM initiative to work toward a Memorandum of Understanding with the GOH regarding the sharing of U.S. radar information.

-- February 18, 2004: INL thanks Post for the hospitality shown to the joint Department of State/Department of Defense team during the February 2-4 visit to look at the HAF's procedures for air interdiction. INL indicates that it is in the early stages of preparing a briefing for Department of State principals and the interagency community on a region-wide course of action regarding procedures for air interdiction operations initiated using information provided by the USG (ref V).

-- February 24, 2004: USDAO Tegucigalpa reports the Commander of the HAF expressed his annoyance with the State-DOD team's request for a written document outlining Honduras' intercept procedures, indicating that the document could not be shared with the State-DOD team because it was classified secret. Embassy comments in this report that: "It is not clear how widely the HAF has distributed comprehensive, fully articulated standard operating

procedures regarding Honduran intercept procedures" (ref W).

-- March 14, 2004: Post suggests rewording entry to read: "Burned aircraft found on the property of a leading local industrialist; no evidence of HAF involvement in this incident" (ref Y).

14. (S) The following answers are keyed to ref Y and reflect Post's best information.

a. Yes. The report the Government of Honduras (GOH) provided was intended to satisfy the GOH's commitment to conduct an investigation into the April 14, 2003 incident. The GOH does not/not intend to conduct any further investigation into that incident.

b. Post is unaware of any other GOH investigation into the April 14, 2003 incident apart from the one report already provided.

c. TAT received a copy of the April 14, 2003 P-3 video. TAT reports that it is in possession of the long and short versions of the P-3 video.

d. No.

e. Post notes ref K indicating that on July 18, 2003 General James Hill, Commander USSOUTHCOM, accepted the verbal assurances of the President of Honduras, based on Post's reporting in ref H, that the GOH has a "no shoot down" policy and subsequently ordered a resumption of radar sharing with the GOH based on that assurance.

f. No. TAT reports that the GOH told them they did not consider the January 10, 2004 event an "incident" and therefore no report was ever drafted.

g. It is possible that the GOH has a written policy or other operational documents governing intercept procedures and sorting criteria that it has not shared with the USG. GOH officials told the interagency fact finding team in February that such documents cannot be shared with the USG because they are secret.

h. No. Post is not in possession of any GOH documents concerning GOH procedures and sorting criteria governing air interceptions and the use of warning shots that have not already been provided to the Department.

Palmer